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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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India thump NZ, retain T20 World Cup

Samson's blitz powers India to record total in finals as Black Caps buckle under pressure

AHMEDABAD, 8 MARCH

India produced a batting spectacle of rare ferocity to overwhelm New Zealand by 96 runs in the summit clash and defend the T20 World Cup title after posting a record total here on Sunday.

Powered by a blazing 89 from Sanju Samson and explosive half-centuries from Abhishek Sharma (52) and Ishan Kishan (54), India's top order went on a six-hitting spree posting a massive 255 for five and leaving the New Zealand bowlers shell-shocked.

The total was the highest ever posted in a T20 World Cup final, capping a dominant display by the defending champions. India was also the first team to win the tournament.

The scoreboard pressure got to the Black Caps who desperately went after the Indian bowlers and ended up losing three quick wickets in quick succession. Their biggest hope Finn Allen (9) and the dangerous Glenn Phillips (5) perished early and with that New Zealand's chances of putting up a decent fight went up in smoke.

India is 1st team to win 3 T20 WC | 3 straight ICC cups | 1st team to win T20 WC on home soil | 1st Asian team to win 5 WCs

Axar Patel (3/27) and Jasprit Bumrah (4/15) bulldozed the Kiwi innings and with the departure of Tim Seifert (52 off 26), the contest was then reduced to a formality.

OPENING RAMPAGE

Invited to bat, Samson and Abhishek went on the offensive, tearing into the Kiwi attack with audacious strokeplay. The duo hammered boundaries at will and raised a breathtaking 98-run opening stand in just 7.1 overs, setting the tone for a massive total. India crossed the 200-run mark in 15 overs.

However, New Zealand succeeded in putting the brake by dismissing Samson, Kishan and skipper Suryakumar Yadav (0) in six balls.

BRIEF SCORES:

India: 255 for 5 in 20 overs. (Sanju Samson 89, Ishan Kishan 54, Abhishek Sharma 52; James Neesham 3/46).

New Zealand: 159 all out in 19 overs. (Tim Seifert 52, J Bumrah 4/15, Axar Patel 3/23). *—PTI*

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Delhi sees highest March temp in 50 years

PHOTO: FREEPIK

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

Several north Indian states are experiencing a steady rise in mercury, with Delhi recording its highest first-week March temperature in 50 years at 35.7°C on Saturday, according to IMD data. The previous high was 34.8°C on March 5, 1999. Safdarjung, Delhi's main weather station, saw temperatures 7.3°C above normal, with minimums at 17.4°C. IMD reports show the second-highest March temperature since 2011 was 33.6°C in 2016. Nearby Haryana hit 36.3°C at Hisar, while Uttarakhand's Dehradun saw temperatures reaching 31.5°C. Jammu and Kashmir experienced above normal temperatures, with Jammu recording 30°C. Shimla also predicted a heatwave in four districts. Delhi's air quality worsened, with an AQI of 246, moving from 'moderate' to 'poor'. *—Agencies*

Nitish Kumar's son Nishant joins JD(U) in Patna

PATNA, 8 MARCH

Nishant Kumar, son of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, joined the JD(U) on Sunday at party headquarters in Patna, amid a warm reception. An engineering graduate in his 40s, Nishant expressed his commitment to strengthening the party's organisation and said, "My father decided to go to the Rajya Sabha. It was his personal decision. We all respect it. We will keep working under his guidance." He praised his father's contributions over the last twenty years and added, "I will take the development work done by the CM to the masses." There is speculation Nishant may be appointed Deputy CM. *—PTI*

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LoP Rahul Gandhi held an unpublished book in the Lok Sabha *—PTI*

War, no confidence against LS Speaker to make Parl stormy

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

The second half of the Budget session of Parliament is set for a stormy start on Monday, with the Lok Sabha scheduled to take up the Opposition-sponsored resolution seeking the removal of Speaker Om Birla.

The ongoing conflict in West Asia is also likely to figure prominently as the Opposition is already attacking the government over its stance towards Iran, the US "waiver" on India's Russian oil purchase, among other issues.

Besides, the outcome of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in poll-bound West Bengal, which led to the deletion of nearly 60 lakh votes, is also expected to cast its shadow on parliamentary proceedings.

The no-confidence resolution against Birla was given by several Opposition leaders who alleged that he had acted in a "blatantly partisan" manner in the House.

They also accused Birla of making false allegations against Congress leaders. Birla had stated that the Opposition planned to attack Prime Minister Narendra Modi, prompting him to advise the PM to skip the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address.

On Saturday, Prime Minister Modi backed Birla, saying he had taken all Parliamentarians along and was committed to the principles of the Constitution and Parliamentary democracy. No Speaker has been removed through a no confidence motion.

Birla had recused himself from the proceedings of the House from the date of submission of the notice, with the Lok Sabha secretariat saying he would return only after the disposal of the agenda.

Apart from the no-trust notice, the US-Israel strikes on Iran and growing tensions in West Asia that have led to disruption in crude oil supplies and escalation in prices are also likely to come up during the session. The Opposition is expected to question the government's policy on the matter, especially after the US said that it will "allow" India to buy Russian oil. *—PTI*

Israel bombs Tehran oil facility, fire lights the sky

DUBAI, 8 MARCH

Israel bombarded oil storage facilities in Tehran on Sunday, causing massive fires in the Iranian capital as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu promised "many surprises" for the next phase of the West Asia conflict.

Meanwhile, the UAE said that its defences intercepted 1,342 drones, 221 ballistic missiles, 8 cruise missiles from Iran, a day after Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian apologised to Gulf countries for attacking them after the US-Israel airstrikes killed supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on 28 February.

Pezeshkian said that his apology on Saturday had been misinterpreted to mean that Iran would stop attacking Gulf countries.

"We are forced to retaliate to attacks but this does not mean we have a dispute with a (neighbouring) country or want to upset their people," Pezeshkian said on Sunday.

WEST ASIA WAR DAY-9

Fire fell from the sky in Tehran after Israeli strikes *—SCREENGRAB*

2 KILLED IN SAUDI

A military projectile fell onto a residential area in Saudi Arabia and killing an Indian and Bangladeshi, the first deaths in the Kingdom from the war.

52,000 Indians travelled safely from Gulf region to India between 1-7 March: MEA

IRAN PICKS NEW SUPREME LEADER

The Assembly of Experts in Iran said it reached a majority consensus regarding the successor to the Khamenei, according to reports from the Tehran-based Mehr News Agency (MNA). However, the name has not yet been revealed.

Israel responded by saying it will kill the next Supreme Leader. US President Donald Trump reiterated that the US and Israeli strikes have decimated Iran's entire leadership. He said they were cleaning a "cancer" off the face of the earth. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 3, 6, 7

India-China should be partners, not rivals: Chinese FM

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Sunday said India and China should see each other as "partners, not rivals" and an "opportunity instead of a threat", calling for stronger cooperation between the two neighbours. Speaking at his annual press conference on the sidelines of the National People's Congress, Wang said both countries should follow the direction set by Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping to improve bilateral ties. He added that the US and Israeli airstrikes on Iran "should never have happened". *—PTI*

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Centre seeks response after Didi snubs Prez

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday questioned the last-minute shift of the venue from Bidhannagar to a site near the airport as well as the absence of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and her ministers during her visit.

The Centre has sought a response from the state government by 5pm on Sunday over the "violations" of the rules related to protocol, venue and route arrangements during her visit, sources said.

In a letter to the West Bengal Chief Secretary, the Union Home Secretary has asked him to furnish a response on the violations of the 'Blue Book' rules of protocol, venue and route arrangements.

The 'Blue Book' is a confidential document which lists out rules for the security and protocol for the President, Vice-President and the Prime Minister and their families.

President Murmu on Saturday expressed dismay over a low turnout at a tribal community event near Bagdogra airport, and questioned the decision to shift the venue from Bidhannagar.

The Centre has taken note of the fact that only the Siliguri Mayor was present to receive her which is a violation of protocol, they said.

The washroom set up for the President allegedly did not have water for which an explanation has been sought from the state government. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 2, 3

ON WOMEN'S DAY

UP girls get financial aid until graduation

LUCHNOW, 8 MARCH

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said the state government will provide all girls with a comprehensive package of financial assistance from birth until graduation.

On the occasion of 'International Women's Day', Adityanath launched the mobile application of the Rozgar Sangam portal, distributed appointment letters to newly selected sevikas and attended the Pink Rozgar Mahakumbh 2026.

Adityanath said financial assistance would begin immediately after the birth of a girl child once her name is registered in the official birth registration system.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath plays with a baby at an event for International Women's Day **PHOTO: X @CMOfficeUPs**

The government will also fund all vaccinations for the girl child.

The financial assistance would continue at different stages of education. When a girl enrolls in Class 1, the amount will be credited to her bank account after registration. Similarly, when she passes Class 5 and takes admission in the next class, funds will again be transferred.

Adityanath said Rs 25,000 is being provided under different categories and around 2.7 million girls are currently benefiting from the scheme.

He also highlighted the state government's mass marriage programme for economically weaker families. Rs 1 lakh is provided for the marriage of eligible beneficiaries under this scheme.

Moreover, under the Laxmibai Scooty Scheme the government plans to distribute scooters to girls.

The government has also decided to establish digital entrepreneurship centres in every Nyaya Panchayat under a new scheme, which will connect 4,000 women in the state.s *—PTI*

Student goes on a rampage in Ballari hostel; 1 dead, 7 injured

BALLARI, 8 MARCH

A Class 9 student allegedly attacked fellow students with an iron rod, killing one student and injuring seven others at the Gurukul International School in Ballari.

The incident occurred on the night of 7 March at the school's hostel. All the injured have been admitted to Trauma Care Hospital here for treatment.

While five of the injured were released, the hostel warden and a student is currently admitted in the hospital.

Ballari superintendent of police Suman D Pannaker told Salar News, "The accused struck one boy with an iron rod, leading to his death. He also assaulted other students and the hostel warden when he tried to intervene.The police have launched a manhunt to nab him."

A case has been registered against the accused, who hails from Gonalu village.

The deceased, Hemanth, 14, hailed from Adavani in Andhra Pradesh.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Harsha visited the spot and inspected it. He also met the injured.

The deceased boy's father Lakshmikant said "I received a call from the hostel late at night that my son was in a serious condition. When I reached Ballari, my son had already died."

He blamed the school administration for the incident. "How is it possible for a boy to attack so many students so brutally? He may be a drug addict," he said.

Meanwhile, Gurukul International School chairman Govinda told Salar News, "The accused student was a quite boy and all teachers have a positive opinion about him. Nothing like this had ever happened before and we are unable to understand why such an incident occurred." *—Salar News*

Pramoda Devi meets HCM over KSIC land dispute

Says moving silk factory will affect quality of production

MYSURU, 8 MARCH

Member of the erstwhile royal family Pramoda Devi Wadiyar met with Mysuru district in charge Minister HC Mahadevappa and urged him to stop the construction of a stadium in the KSIC land in Mysuru's T Narasipura. She said that the stadium would affect the quality of silk production.

The State government has proposed building a sports stadium in five acres of land in the factory premises of Karnataka Silk Industries Corporation (KSIC) in T Narasipura, triggering outrage from various sections of society. Although Mahadevappa had earlier said that the silk production would not be affected, farmers launched an indefinite protest, which has been going on for more than a fortnight.

The royal family matriarch said: "The climatic and geographical conditions of the T Narasipura region, along with the trees cultivated for this purpose and the availability of adequate flowing water, create a highly suitable environment essential for sericulture (silk cultivation). Any variation in these conditions can affect the quality of the silk."

Minister HC Mahadevappa; Pramoda Devi Wadiyar —*PTI*

Wadiyar noted that Mysore Silk, established by Maharaja Nalvadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar of Mysore, is renowned for its traditional Mysore design sarees and panche (dhoti). The fact that Mysore Silk has been granted the Geographical Indication (GI) tag certifies its uniqueness and the high quality of the silk produced.

"It is widely known that Mysore Silk stands as a testimony to India's rich textile heritage. With its elegance, craftsmanship, uniqueness, and deep historical and cultural significance, Mysore Silk has been passed down as a cherished legacy from one generation to another," she stated. She added that Mysore silk has remained at the forefront of fashion, despite global trends shifting elsewhere.

- Wadiyar noted that Mysore Silk is renowned for its traditional Mysore design sarees and panche (dhoti). Mysore Silk has been granted the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

Wadiyar stated that the Minister responded positively and has given an assurance that the KSIC factory at T Narasipura will not be shut down. —*Salar News*

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and Rural Development Minister Priyank Kharge at an event in Kalaburagi on Sunday —*X@DKSHIVAKUMAR*

Centre puts burden on public: DKS on LPG price hike

KALABURAGI, 8 MARCH

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Sunday slammed the Centre for the Rs 60 increase in the domestic Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinder, saying that the central government "always puts the burden" on the general public.

"The Central government always puts all the burden on the common man," he said.

Earlier, Congress MP from Davanagere, Prabha Mallikarjun, also expressed concern over the recent hike in the price of LPG cylinders, saying, "I think the Government of India should think about it because every middle-class house, poor class, every class requires LPG cylinders. The government itself had started an initiative where LPG cylinders were given at a subsidy. So now, I don't know, this is going to be an additional burden to all."

The hike to the LPGs comes amid the war in West Asia which has severely impacted oil and fuel prices.

After the increase, 14.2 kg LPG costs about Rs 913 in New Delhi compared with around Rs 1,046 in Pakistan, Rs 1,241 in Sri Lanka and Rs 1,207 in Nepal.

The increase comes amid discussions around India's energy supply and fuel availability. Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri earlier assured that there is no shortage of energy in India and consumers need not worry about supply disruption. —*ANI*

Nurse, 3 others blackmail man, arrested

DAVANAGERE, 8 MARCH

The police have arrested a four-member gang, including a nurse, for allegedly blackmailing a businessman in Vidyanagar in Davanagere and demanding lakhs of rupees from him.

The accused Sushmita, Bekkina Kanna Krishna, Rahul, and Channabasappa had reportedly befriended the victim by claiming financial distress and later attempted to extort money from him.

Sushmita works as a nurse at a private hospital.

According to the police, the 66-year-old businessman from Davanagere came into contact with Sushmita after she approached him claiming that she was facing personal difficulties. Their acquaintance gradually developed into a friendship.

Later, Sushmita allegedly conspired with her associates and visited the businessman's private apartment in Siddaveerappa Layout. During the visit, the group reportedly recorded his video and later used it to blackmail him.

The accused allegedly threatened to release the video on social media and share it with the media if their demand was not met. The gang initially demanded Rs 25 lakh from the victim.

Under pressure, the businessman agreed to pay Rs 12 lakh, but the accused allegedly continued to harass him through repeated phone calls.

The accused then asked him to pay Rs 1 lakh to Anjaneya Layout, which he did.

Following a complaint, a police team launched an operation and arrested them. —*Salar News*

HDK slams WB govt after Prez row

BENGALURU, 8 MARCH

Referring to the alleged protocol lapses during President Droupadi Murmu's visit to West Bengal, Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy on Sunday said the differences in political ideology cannot justify disregard for constitutional offices.

The JD(S) leader emphasised that in a mature democracy, every government, irrespective of party affiliation, should uphold the dignity of institutions that safeguard our constitutional framework.

President Murmu had expressed displeasure and anguish over the protocol lapses during her recent Siliguri visit, citing a last-minute venue change for the Santal conference and the absence of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the state ministers during her reception.

Kumaraswamy said on X, "Insulting the President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu avaru, is nothing short of an affront to the Constitution itself. The office of the President symbolises the sovereignty, unity and dignity of our Republic, and it stands above all political considerations."

Echoing these sentiments, State BJP President B Y Vijayendra said he was "deeply pained" by the manner in which Murmu was treated in West Bengal.

"President Murmu Ji's life is itself a living symbol of the strength and pride of India's tribal communities, and to disrespect her in such a setting is to dishonour the millions of tribal citizens whose aspirations and identity she represents," he added.

Vijayendra said the TMC government's conduct reflects a deeply worrying pattern of disregard for constitutional norms.

"Those responsible must be held accountable. The President's office stands beyond political negligence and arrogance," he said.—*PTI*

IFTAR PARTY

NA Harish, BDA Chairman and Shantinagar MLA organised an Iftar meeting on Sunday at Nandan Grounds, Austin Town —*SALAR*

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

PRIVACY FOR JUSTICE SEEKERS
ABBAKKA FOUGHT. HER BRIGADE STILL FIGHTS
POLICE FOR PROTECTION NOT NEGOTIATION
SAFER JUSTICE FOR WOMEN
PROTEST BY ABBAKKA BRIGADE
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2026

Members of Abbakka Brigade stage a demonstration for various demands on the occasion of 'International Women's Day' at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Sunday; Women police celebrate 'International Women's Day' at Freedom Park; A group of women take to the streets in Kalyan Nagar to promote women empowerment, health awareness and social responsibility —*MOHAMMAD ASAD*

Make better legal safeguards for women: Activists

BENGALURU, 8 MARCH

At least 100 citizens gathered at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Saturday to mark International Women's Day by demanding stronger procedural safeguards for women approaching the police and legal system after facing crimes such as harassment, stalking, domestic violence and abuse.

The protest was organised by Abbakka Brigade, the women's wing of the Broseph Foundation, and led by social activist Dushyant Dubey. Women, students, professionals and social workers from across the City participated, highlighting the challenges survivors often face while navigating the justice system.

Participants said women frequently experience additional distress during the legal process, including exposure of personal information, pressure to settle cases informally and procedural practices that intensify trauma.

Protesters signed a memorandum addressed to Home Minister G Parameshwara seeking a statewide circular introducing safeguards for women complainants in police stations. Key demands included allowing alternative contact details in complaints, strict action against officers leaking personal information, prioritising FIR registration —*Salar News*

Mysuru cleanliness roadshow receives overwhelming response

MYSURU, 8 MARCH

The Swachhata roadshow organised by the Mysuru City Corporation on Sunday to create awareness among citizens about the importance of cleanliness received overwhelming response.

People riding vintage cars and bikes, cultural troupes, pourakarmikas, students and members of various organizations participated in the roadshow.

District-in-charge Minister HC Mahadevappa called upon the public to actively participate in such rallies organized by city civic bodies and the district administration.

The Minister also recalled the contributions of Maharajas of Mysuru, Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar in development of Karnataka.

Highlighting the role of Pourkarmikas in keeping clean the city, he asked residents to strive to keep their surroundings clean.

The Minister also extended his greetings to women on the occasion of 'International Women's Day' on Sunday. He highlighted the immense contributions of women across the globe and emphasized on the need to protect the dignity of women. —*Salar News*

- District-in-charge Minister HC Mahadevappa called upon the public to actively participate in such rallies organized by city civic bodies and the district administration in Mysuru.

Men and women in bikes participate in the Swachhata roadshow organised by the Mysuru City Corporation in Mysuru on Sunday —*SALAR*

Cong forms committees for Bagalkot, Davanagere polls

BENGALURU, 8 MARCH

The Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) has constituted steering committees for the upcoming by-elections in Bagalkot and Davanagere South Assembly constituencies.

KPCC President DK Shivakumar announced the move to oversee candidate selection and electoral strategy. Bypolls for the Bagalkote and Davanagere South Assembly were necessitated following the deaths of sitting Congress MLAs HY Meti and Shamanur Shivashankarappa.

KPCC Working President Vasantha Kumar will convene the 15-member Bagalkot committee, which includes district in-charge minister RB Thimmapur and ministers MB Patil, Shivananda Patil, Shivaraj Tangadagi, Sharanbasappa Darshanapur, Raheem Khan and Byrathi Suresh.

Party Working President Manjunath Bhandary will convene the 16-member Davanagere South committee. Members include district in-charge minister SS Mallikarjun and other Ministers. —*PTI*

NEW TAXATION SYSTEM

Firms to benefit from State's alcohol policy: Nuvama

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

Karnataka's new alcohol policy marks a significant shift in the state's regulatory landscape. With price deregulation and a transition to a new taxation system, major industry players are expected to benefit while local companies lose ground, according to a report by Nuvama.

The Karnataka State government decided to end its role in liquor pricing. The shift toward a price-deregulated market allows larger companies to capture market share through their superior innovation, distribution heft, and advertising capabilities.

The report highlighted that Karnataka's alcohol reform is seen as a "big positive" as the state will transition to an Alcohol in Beverage (AIB) taxation system starting in April 2026. This framework, which taxes products based on their alcohol content rather than selling price, is regarded globally as the gold standard.

Nuvama noted that the transition will occur gradually over the next three to four years to provide "sufficient time for a smooth rollout without disrupting the market."

— FREEPIK

The report suggested that the tax shift looks more positive for beer due to its lower alcohol salience compared to spirits; hence, beer volumes could see a "sharp uptick in FY27 in Karnataka," especially since the category currently faces a low base following a double-digit volume decrease in the 2026 fiscal year.

Furthermore, the government now permits distilleries and breweries to operate 24 hours a day.

Nuvama indicated that the government's tax revenue target of Rs 450 billion for the 2027 fiscal year implies an industry growth of about 13 per cent year-on-year. —*ANI*

—PTI

T'gana CM unveils restored Nizam-era assembly hall

HYDERABAD, 8 MARCH

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Sunday inaugurated the renovated Nizam-era legislative hall, which will now serve as the state's Legislative Council. Upon coming to power in December 2023, the Congress prioritised the renovation of the edifice. The heritage building was Town Hall during the Nizam rule. While its construction began in 1905, it was completed in 1913. The building is hailed by heritage lovers as an exquisite example of the Indo-Sarasenic style of architecture. The heritage building served as the Legislative Assembly in the undivided Andhra Pradesh till the mid 1980s. The legislative council has been functioning from a different building in the legislature premises. —PTI

—PTI

In my family women were bosses: Rahul

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

On International Women's Day, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi posted a video of his interaction with young women students. "I grew up in a family where the women were the bosses," Gandhi told students during an interaction in Kerala recently, while asserting that women are generally more intelligent than men. "I was deeply impressed by each student's dreams, curiosity, and confidence. Such conversations remind us that when women recognise their potential and move forward with an open mind, they can bring about extraordinary change," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said. Posting the video on X, he said, interacting with some young students in Kerala was incredibly inspiring. —PTI

MLA's son booked for assaulting man over FB comment

MALAPPURAM, 8 MARCH

A case has been registered against the son of a Muslim League MLA for allegedly assaulting a man in Manjeri over a derogatory comment posted on the legislator's Facebook page, police said on Sunday. Following the altercation, two people suffered injuries from the altercation. The case was registered against Ameer, son of Manjeri MLA UA Latheef, and his friends following a complaint lodged by Latheef, a native of Mullampara, on Wednesday, police said. Police said a counter case was also registered against Latheef for allegedly attacking Nisar with a knife. Manjeri police said no arrests have been made so far and that CCTV footage from the area is being examined as the investigation continues. —PTI

Punjab Budget: Monthly monetary aid for women

CHANDIGARH, 8 MARCH

The AAP government in Punjab announced a new scheme on Sunday under which Rs 1,000 per month will be given to all women, with Scheduled Caste women getting Rs 1,500 monthly. Providing monthly assistance was a key poll promise of the ruling party before 2022 Punjab assembly polls. Presenting the state budget for 2026-27, Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema announced the implementation of 'Mukh Mantri Mawan Dhian Satikar Yojna' under which government will transfer the money directly to the accounts of women. The announcement coincided with International Women's Day. —PTI

India, China are partners, not rivals: FM Wang Yi

China is happy to see re-energised interactions, he said

BEIJING, 8 MARCH

India and China should view each other as "partners, not rivals" and "opportunity instead of threat", Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said here on Sunday.

Wang, at his annual press conference on the sidelines of the Chinese parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), said both countries should stick to the direction set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping to improve relations without interference.

Modi and Xi had a successful meeting in Tianjin last August, Wang said. "Building on the fresh start enabled by their Kazan meeting in 2024, the Tianjin summit brought about further improvement in China-India relations," he added.

"We are heartened to see re-energised interactions at all levels, a new record in bilateral trade, and closer people-to-people exchanges. All this has brought tangible benefits to the two peoples," he said.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi stressed on closer cooperation —ANI

- Modi and Xi had a successful meeting in Tianjin last August, Wang said. Building on the fresh start enabled by their Kazan meeting in 2024, the Tianjin summit brought about further improvement in China-India relations, he added

On the future course of the ties, Wang said both countries "must maintain the correct strategic perception of each other as partner rather than rival, and opportunity instead of threat".

"Both sides also must uphold good-neighbourliness and friendship, and jointly safeguard peace and stability in the border areas and focus on development," he said.

"As each other's important neighbours and members of the Global South, China and India enjoy profound civilisational ties and share extensive common interests," Wang said.

"Mutual trust and cooperation is beneficial to the development of the two countries, while division and confrontation is detrimental to the rejuvenation of Asia," the Chinese foreign minister said.

The two sides should follow the direction set by leaders and remove interference, he said without elaborating.

He said India and China should support each other hosting BRICS summits. While India is set to host the summit this year, China is due to host the summit in 2027.

BRICS which originally comprised Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, later expanded with the admission of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, Indonesia and Iran.

India-China relations, which were frozen for five years due to military standoff in eastern Ladakh, began the process of normalisation following two summits between Modi and Xi at Kazan in Russia in 2024 followed by a second meeting on the sidelines of the SCO summit in Tianjin last year.

Both sides resumed visa and flight services besides initiating a series of measures to normalise their relations. —PTI

EPS hits back at Stalin, alleges DMK is 'slave' to Congress

ERODE, 8 MARCH

Hitting back at Chief Minister MK Stalin, AIADMK Chief **Edappadi K Palaniswami** on Sunday alleged that the ruling DMK is "slave" to its ally, the Congress party.

Addressing a poll rally here at Perunthurai, Palaniswami said the Congress-DMK were engaged in a war of words for about 20 days over seat sharing and connected matters.

Eventually, the Congress party intimidated its ally, the DMK, and secured 28 seats for the Assembly polls to be held in April-May this year, he alleged. People have not forgotten that even when DMK patriarch M Karunanidhi was alive, the Congress party intimidated and made DMK a "slave" and forged an alliance with it. This was achieved by conducting "raids" while seat-sharing talks were going on, he claimed.

However, his party, the AIADMK, is an independent party which chose to fight the 2024 LS polls on its own.

Now, in order to dislodge the "anti-people" DMK from power, his party has formed an alliance and it is robust, transparent and cordial unlike the DMK-led alliance, he said.

Reiterating the welfare schemes implemented during the AIADMK regime, including distribution of milch goats, he said, however, the Stalin-led government is a "failure model government, bye bye Stalin."

Further, he said, "Stalin is claiming that the BJP will swallow the AIADMK. No party can do it. No force can destroy the AIADMK."

Expelled AIADMK leaders, including O Panneerselvam and V Senthilbalaji, are like "demonetised currency," have no value. They were expelled as they had betrayed the party.

He alleged that "Senthilbalaji deceived the AIADMK itself, such a big party, so if he lands in trouble he will betray anyone."

On former CM O Panneerselvam, who joined the DMK on 27 February, Palaniswami said he was expelled for his betrayal.

Now, he has sought refuge in the DMK described as an "evil force" by AIADMK founder MGR. Hence, whichever party Panneereselvam may go, that party will face decline, claimed Palaniswami by citing a Tamil saying related to a tortoise entering a household.

Whoever tried to betray AIADMK was driven out by "atma" of MGR, Jayalalithaa and the party is now robust, fearless and it has become "pure." —PTI

Jaishankar to make statement in LS on West Asia situation

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will make a statement in the Lok Sabha regarding the situation in West Asia on Monday.

The second half of the Budget session of Parliament will begin on Monday.

According to the revised list of business of the Lok Sabha for 9 March circulated on Sunday evening, "Dr S Jaishankar to make a statement regarding the situation in West Asia."

The opposition has demanded a discussion on the situation in West Asia.

India is continuously monitoring the evolving situation in West Asia, especially in the context of the safety of its citizens stranded in the region.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has said more than 52,000 Indians have returned to the country following the partial opening of the airspace across the region. —PTI

AHEAD OF POLLS

BJP using 'Vanish Commission' to erase voters: Didi

KOLKATA, 8 MARCH

West Bengal Chief Minister **Mamata Banerjee**'s sit-in against alleged arbitrary deletions in the post-SIR voter list entered its third day on Sunday. She accused the BJP of misusing the 'Vanish Commission' to erase legitimate voters from the electoral rolls. Her comments come as the full bench of the Election Commission is scheduled to arrive in Kolkata to review poll preparedness ahead of the state assembly elections.

Banerjee also alleged that the country is witnessing an unprecedented and direct assault on its democratic foundations. She stated that in their 'One Nation, One Leader, One Party' frenzy, the BJP has systematically weaponised every democratic institution and constitutional post to serve their anti-people ambitions.

She claimed that the BJP's ultimate goal is to replace the Constitution framed by Babasaheb Ambedkar with its party manifesto. Banerjee accused the central agencies, commissions, media, and judiciary of being misused against Bengal, and said the BJP leadership, whom she called "zamindars of Delhi," would never succeed in subjugating Bengal.

Her dharna at Dharmatala is described as an answer to anti-Bengal agendas seeking to humiliate and persecute the people of the state. The row over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls continues, with the TMC claiming large-scale deletion of genuine voters.

Official data shows that 63.66 lakh names — about 8.3 per cent of the electorate — have been deleted since November, reducing the voter base from 7.66 crore to just over 7.04 crore. Over 60.06 lakh electors are under adjudication, which could further alter constituency-level electoral equations. —PTI

MY RESIGNATION IS A CONSCIOUS DECISION: WB GUV ANANDA BOSE

KOLKATA, 8 MARCH

CV Ananda Bose on Sunday said his resignation as West Bengal governor was a "conscious decision" and asserted that the reasons for his exit will remain confidential till the right time comes.

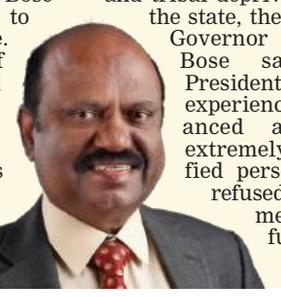
Speaking to reporters at the Kolkata airport, Bose said he would return to Bengal to cast his vote.

Bose, a native of Kerala, had shifted his voting base to Bengal barely a week before tendering resignation from his office.

"I took a conscious decision to put in my papers, the reasons of which will remain confidential till the right time arrives," Bose said.

"The rules of this game include knowing when it ends," he added.

Asked to comment on the angst expressed by President Murmu on alleged protocol violations and tribal deprivation in the state, the outgoig Governor Ananda Bose said,"The President is very experienced, balanced and an extremely dignified person." He refused to comment any further . —PTI



Savarkar's views on Hindutva relevant: Gadkari

NAGPUR, 8 MARCH

Union minister Nitin Gadkari has said Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was a staunch patriot with a scientific ideological perspective, and his explanation of Hindutva is still relevant and useful.

In an apparent reference to Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, Gadkari said he once told a "big political leader", who was critical of Savarkar, that if the legendary freedom fighter is not great, then no one in the country is great.

Addressing a programme on Saturday organised by Swatantrya Veer Savarkar Smarak Samiti, where former Chief of Army Staff General Manoj Pande (retd) was felicitated, Gadkari said Savarkar is a source of inspiration for everyone.

It was Savarkar's clear opinion that the caste system and its divisions, as well as untouchability present in Hindu society, should be completely destroyed, he pointed out.

Savarkar was a staunch patriot, and his writings, as well as the movie based on him, should reach more and more people, Gadkari added.

Rahul Gandhi, Leader of Opposition, has claimed that Savarkar apologised to the British to get out of jail. —PTI

40Lakh women in Assam to get Rs 9,000 each ahead of polls

GUWAHATI, 8 MARCH

On the occasion of International Women's Day on Sunday, Assam Chief Minister **Himanta Biswa Sarma** said that nearly 40 lakh 'Orunodoi' beneficiaries will receive Rs 9,000 each next week.

The consolidated payment, comprising grants for four months along with an additional amount, will be made on 10 March, making it a record bank transfer of Rs 3,600 crore on a single day under a government scheme, he claimed.

The single-day transfer to

women beneficiaries comes as the state gears up for Assembly elections, when the BJP-led government will seek a third straight term.

Orunodoi is a flagship poverty alleviation scheme, under which eligible women beneficiaries receive Rs 1,250 per month.

On the occasion, meetings will be held at the local level across the state, and the CM invited the beneficiary families to attend those, maintaining that it was the support of the people which has been the strength of the government.

Sarma said in a post on X: "Empowering women has been central to Assam's growth story. From financial security to education, healthcare and entrepreneurship, our initiatives are helping lakhs of women step forward with confidence and independence." —PTI

Don't want third term as RS member, says Digvijaya

BHOPAL, 8 MARCH

Veteran Congress leader **Digvijaya Singh** on Sunday rejected retirement plan rumours, saying he has only requested the party not to consider him for a third term in Rajya Sabha after his stint as a sitting MP expires.

He will continue to serve the party till his last breath, Singh added.

The speculation about Singh's future plans surfaced after he posted a video of a couple enjoying their retirement by visiting various places in the country on 5 March.

"My Retirement Plans? Maybe. Why not? Jai Siya Ram," he had written on X, triggering speculation that he was hinting at his retirement from active politics.

Singh said he has only requested the Congress party not to consider him for a third term in the Rajya Sabha after he retires as a sitting MP.

He said this doesn't mean he won't work for Congress anymore, but rather he will serve the party till his last breath.

Clarifying his stand, Singh said, "Look, this is just a funny thing. There are a couple from Odisha, retired bank managers, who posted a video of their trip across the country. I thought it was a strange idea, so I posted it on social media. But I don't have any connection to it."

He evaded a direct reply to a question on his stand in the event of the Congress asking him to continue in Rajya Sabha, calling it a hypothetical scenario. —PTI

ONLINE ATTACK

Mammootty asks CPI(M) man to stay away in Wayanad, stirs row

THIRU'PURAM, 8 MARCH

Amidst reports of online attacks against Malayalam superstar Mammootty following his visit to the newly built township in Wayanad, senior leaders of the ruling CPI(M) on Sunday sought to play down the controversy.

The issue surfaced after Mammootty reportedly expressed displeasure towards the party's Wayanad district Secretary K Rafeeq for accompanying him during his personal visit to the township on Saturday.

According to reports, the actor, generally considered a fellow traveler of the Marxist party, asked Rafeeq why he was standing close to him and said people might think he had come there for the ruling party.

Following this, the actor faced intense online attacks allegedly from Left-leaning

Mammootty —ANI

social media handles.

CPI(M) leaders and Ministers PA Mohammed Riyas and P Rajeev responded to the development, but chose not to give any direct reply.

Speaking to a TV channel, Riyas said CPI(M) district secretaries do not go around intruding into places unnecessarily.

He said Rafeeq was a social activist who had actively participated in the relief and rehabilitation activities following the landslide in Wayanad and he went to the township on Saturday in that capacity.

Stating that Mammootty is a person who recognises such individuals cutting across politics, Riyas also said the actor had visited the township to independently understand the situation there.

Meanwhile, Minister Rajeev, while speaking to reporters in Kochi, praised Mammootty for visiting the township despite his busy schedule and said his visit has given further visibility to the government's township project for the landslide survivors.

However, Congress leader Cherian Philip alleged that the online attack by CPI(M) supporters against Mammootty on social media was "cruel". —PTI

Nishant joins JD(U) as Nitish takes RS route

PATNA, 8 MARCH

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's son Nishant Kumar joined the JD(U) on Sunday and said he would work to strengthen the party's organisation.

Nishant, an engineering graduate is in his 40s, was inducted into the party at its headquarters here in the presence of top leaders, including Union minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh 'Lalan' and JD(U)'s National Working President Sanjay Jha.

Nishant said, "My father decided to go to the Rajya Sabha……I will work to strengthen the organisation."

Nishant claimed his father, as the longest-serving chief minister of Bihar, did a lot for the state. People of the state will never forget the CM's contribution to the state's development, he said.

Nitish's son received a rousing reception at the JD(U) office on his arrival.

Party functionaries gathered outside the office and were seen waving party flags and beating drums.

- Nishant claimed his father, as the longest-serving Chief Minister of Bihar, did a lot for the state.

A close aide of Nitish Kumar earlier claimed that a unanimous decision had been taken to make Nishant deputy chief minister in the new government to be formed upon his father's resignation.

CM Nitish Kumar filed his nomination papers for the Rajya Sabha polls on Thursday.

JD(U) Harnaut MLA, Hari Narayan Singh claimed that Nishant would be elected to the state Legislative council in April. —PTI

—SCREENGRAB

One-rupee shoe offer sparks rush in Kozhikode

KOZHIKODE, 8 MARCH

A promotional campaign by a footwear shop promising premium shoes for just Re 1 sparked a massive rush in Kozhikode on Sunday, forcing police to resort to a mild lathicharge. Hundreds of customers, lured by advertisements, flooded the area in the early hours, creating a stampede-like situation. Police said the crowd began gathering around 2am after the shop advertised a deal offering footwear for Re 1 to the first 100 customers who produced a one-rupee note. A boy said he reached by 2.30am but found a huge crowd already waiting. —*PTI*

NCP leader booked in medico's suicide

NANDED, 8 MARCH

A 25-year-old medical student from a private homoeopathic college in Nanded died by suicide, after which police booked a leader of the Nationalist Congress Party for alleged abetment. Police said Akanksha Munjaji Gaikwad, whose parents work as brick kiln labourers, had been staying in a private hostel in the city's HUDCO area for two years. The second-year student was found hanging from a ceiling fan in her hostel room on Friday. The hostel is owned by NCP leader Jeevan Ghogre Patil, a former opposition leader in the Nanded Municipal Corporation. "He frequently demanded outstanding fees and mentally harassed my daughter. Unable to bear the pressure, she took the extreme step," her father alleged. — *PTI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support

Stones hurled at Vande Bharat near Aluva

KOCHI, 8 MARCH

A probe has been launched after an unidentified person hurled a stone at a Vande Bharat Express train near Aluva, officials said on Sunday. Officials from the Railway Protection Force said the incident took place around 7.15pm on Saturday between Aluva and Angamaly railway stations. The stone was pelted at the train operating between Thiruvananthapuram and Mangaluru. No passengers were injured and only minor damage was caused. The RPF has begun an investigation and is checking CCTV cameras installed on the train. Railway Police are also conducting a separate probe. Last month, a man was arrested in Kannur for a similar incident of stoning a moving train. —*PTI*

Accidents, deaths rise on Samruddhi Mahamarg road

MUMBAI, 8 MARCH

Accidents and deaths rose sharply on the Nagpur-Mumbai Samruddhi Mahamarg in 2025, while minor mishaps on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway saw an increase amid a marginal decline in overall crashes, officials said on Sunday citing Maharashtra highway police' data. The Samruddhi Mahamarg recorded 185 accidents in 2025, a 35 per cent increase from the 2024 figure of 137. Fatal accidents on the corridor, which connects Vidarbha's largest city to the country's financial capital, rose from 96 in 2024 to 128 in 2025, while the number of deaths increased from 126 to 152. Accidents involving serious injuries also doubled from 23 to 46. The number of persons seriously injured in accidents surged from 50 to 140. The six-lane access-controlled Samruddhi Corridor was opened to traffic in phases from December 2022. The entire stretch of the road was fully commissioned only last year. — PTI

ED to challenge Al Falah chairman's interim bail

Siddiqui had applied for bail as his wife has stage 4 cancer

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

The ED is expected to challenge the interim bail granted to Al Falah University group chairman Jawad Ahmed Siddiqui as he can influence the probe as "more aspects" of the case are still being investigated, officials said.

A court in Delhi granted two-week interim bail to Siddiqui, 61, on Saturday in a money laundering case linked to the alleged generation of illicit funds, from the fees paid by students of his educational institution, by allegedly misrepresenting the accreditation and recognition of his colleges.

Siddiqui had applied for the interim bail in order to support and take care of his wife, who is suffering from stage 4 cancer and is slated to undergo chemotherapy on 12 March.

ED officials said that the agency will challenge the local court's order before the Delhi High Court soon, stating that its submissions made before the local court, in order to prevent the grant of interim bail to Siddiqui, were "not considered seriously" and that there was another FIR filed against him under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) linked to the Red Fort area blast of 10 November 2025.

It is also expected to inform the HC about the charges filed against him in the ED charge sheet that three doctors, two arrested by the NIA and the third an alleged suicide bomber of the Red Fort area blast, apart from other specialists were appointed at the Al Falah medical college without police verification.

ED officials said they would inform the HC that Siddiqui's wife has been undergoing cancer treatment for the last few years and when she appeared before the ED for recording her statement she had no accompanying caregiver, indicating that does not require her husband's support. — *PTI*

Siddiqui (centre) was granted 2-week interim bail on Saturday in a money laundering case linked to the fees paid by students of his institution. —*PTI*

- ED said it would inform the HC that Siddiqui's wife has been undergoing cancer treatment for some years and that when she appeared before the ED she had no caregiver, indicating that she does not require anyone's help

'INSTANT PUNISHMENT'

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi demolished on Sunday the illegal portions of a house linked to one of the accused in the Uttam Nagar Holi clash case, in which a 26-year-old man was killed —*PTI*

8 held for Delhi Holi murder, suspect's house partly razed

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

The Delhi Police arrested another accused in connection with the killing of a 26-year-old man during a clash between two families in Delhi's Uttam Nagar on the night of Holi festival, an official said. The police have arrested seven people in the case so far and a minor. Meanwhile, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) razed the illegal portions of a house linked to one of the accused on Sunday.

The police said the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act have also been invoked.

The eighth man held is Imran alias Bunty, 38.

Tarun, 26, was killed during a clash between his family and their neighbours in the JJ Colony area on 4 March.

Police said the altercation started after water from a balloon thrown by a girl from Tarun's family splashed on a woman from the neighbouring family during Holi celebrations.

Police said the two families had known each other for nearly five decades but had earlier been involved in disputes over parking and garbage disposal.

Earlier, the police had arrested, Umardeen, 49, Jummadeen, 36, Kamruddin, 36, Mustaque, 46, Muzzafar, 25 and Tahir, 18, and a juvenile.

Tarun's brother demanded strict action against the accused and said that they are not satisfied with the bulldozer action.

MCD authorities reached the locality with two bulldozers and demolished only the illegally constructed portions of a structure linked to one of the suspects.

There was heavy police deployment in the area during the demolition. — *PTI*

- The MCD authorities came to the locality with two bulldozers and demolished only the illegally constructed portions of a structure linked to one of the suspects in the case

NHRC chief for 'complete overhaul' of Paris Principles

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

In the context of conflicts, NHRC chairperson Justice V Ramasubramanian (retd) pitched for a "complete overhaul" of the Paris Principles so that international standards are set for better protection of human rights.

In his remarks during a session on 'NHRCs in Turbulent Times,' held as part of the Raisina Dialogue here on Saturday, he argued that Paris Principles provide only a "cosmetic outlook" on how a human rights institution must be constituted.

The Paris Principles are a set of standards for National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) formulated by the UN in 1993.

These were subsequently endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 1993, and set out the basic guidelines recommended by the UN for human rights institutions.

On the current global situation when several conflicts are taking place in the world, the NHRC chief, without naming anyone or any country, lamented that the first prerequisite for upholding human rights is to "speak out the truth, but today, no world leader can speak the truth."

Justice Ramasubramanian, referring to global conflicts, said the irony of history is that "perpetrators become victims and victims become perpetrators."

"The first half of the 21st century, I think will become the mirror image of the first half of the 20th century. So, what should we do?" he asked.

The NHRC chief pitched for "collaboration between NHRIs of various countries, irrespective of whether historically they were perpetrators or victims." — *PTI*

Husband, 7 others booked for triple talaq in UP

BHADOHI, 8 MARCH

An FIR has been lodged against a man and seven family members for allegedly giving triple talaq and harassing his wife over dowry, officials confirmed. The case was filed on Saturday at the Bhadohi police station after Jannat Bano, 21, accused her husband, Dr Zainul Abedin, and relatives.

Bano said that before marriage, the accused took Rs 10 lakh, claiming it was for a hospital, and another Rs 25 lakh for a government job bribe. She also alleged she was assaulted for dowry. When she returned home, her husband demanded Rs 5 lakh and a car.

On 14 February 2026, the accused pronounced talaq thrice, she said. — *PTI*

Complainant in Seer Saraswati case attacked

PRAYAGRAJ, 8 MARCH

Ashutosh Brahmachari, who had filed a complaint alleging that Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati sexually exploited students at his ashram, was attacked by an unidentified person with a razor on a train here on Sunday, police said.

Reacting to the incident, Saraswati questioned the claim and said that the story appeared "fabricated." He urged the railway administration to conduct an inquiry, so that "the truth comes out."

A GRP official said Ashutosh said that he was travelling to Prayagraj by the Rewa Express when the incident occurred.

The officer said that when the train was approaching Sirathu station in the morning, Ashutosh went to the toilet, and an unidentified person allegedly attacked him with a razor. He sustained minor injuries in the incident and was sent to Calvin Hospital in Prayagraj for a medical examination. Based on the medical examination report, a case will be registered, he said.

The CCTV footage from the spot is also being examined to identify the attacker. Legal action will be taken based on the investigation, he added.

On being asked about the alleged attack, Saraswati said the story appeared "fabricated" and urged the railway to order an inquiry.

The seer said that according to media reports, the attendant of the coach had stated that Ashutosh was fine when he went to the bathroom, but was found injured after returning.

"This appears to be a story created merely to build an atmosphere and to get security cover," he said. — *PTI*

- Reacting to the incident, Saraswati questioned the claim and said that the story appeared "fabricated." He urged the railways to order an inquiry, so that "the truth comes out"

LADIES ONLY

Women loco pilots and Women RPF officials flag off the Ranchi-Lohardaga Express on International Women's Day at the Ranchi railway station in Jharkhand —*PTI*

Legislative reforms were effective: CJI

CHANDIGARH, 8 MARCH

Legislative reforms and judicial discipline have worked in tandem over the past decade, with courts exercising minimal interventions while being vigilant where natural justice demands scrutiny, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said here on Saturday.

He noted that amendments to the Arbitration and Conciliation Act have tightened timelines, strengthened neutrality standards and clarified the contours of judicial oversight. "That balance is not cosmetic. Arbitration cannot thrive without autonomy. But autonomy, if left unmoored, risks arbitrariness. The task has therefore been to allow the arbitral process some room to breathe, while ensuring that its legitimacy remains intact," the CJI said.

He was delivering his keynote address on 'India's Cross-Border Disputes Services: 2026-2030 Outlook for Litigation, Mediation, & Arbitration' at the first edition of India International Disputes Week (IIDW) 2026.

"We want to ensure that India is not only a growing economy, but a reliable jurisdiction too," he said. — *PTI*

1965 war hero George dies in Kerala aged 95

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

Lance Havildar KG George (retd), who was awarded a Vir Chakra in the 1965 India-Pakistan War, passed away in Kerala at the age of 95, his family said on Sunday.

"My grandfather died early on Saturday. He was born in February 1931, and had fought in the 1965 Indo-Pak War," his grandson Remo John said. George had served in the Army's Corps of Signals.

The citation for his Vir Chakra describes his gallant act during the 1965 War. It readsm that, "he displayed courage and devotion to duty of a high order. From the 6th till 10 September 1965, under enemy shelling Lance Havildar (Lineman Field) KG George continued to lead his section to restore communications in the Wagah Sector." — *PTI*

NEW FLATS FOR GOVT STAFF

Modi inaugurates projects worth Rs 15,200 crore in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

Prime Minister Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of projects costing Rs 15,200 crore under the General Pool Residential Accommodation (GPRA) redevelopment plan.

The prime minister, accompanied by Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, visited GPRA Type-5 quarters in Sarojini Nagar and handed over the keys to female allottees. He also interacted with some women labourers.

Spread across key locations like Sarojini Nagar, Netaji Nagar, Kasturba Nagar and Sriniwaspuri, these projects are part of the government's programme to modernise GPRA colonies and create world-class infrastructure for government employees, according to a statement issued on Friday.

The projects have been redeveloped through an innovative self-sustainable financial model that ensures that redevelopment is carried out without burdening the exchequer.

Under this model, the government is developing and monetising a limited portion of the project area for commercial and residential space to finance the entire project.

The revenue generated from it is being used to fund the redevelopment of modern government housing, support infrastructure and public facilities.

The redevelopment plan will provide 9,350 modern flats for government employees, along with the creation of approximately 48 lakh square feet of office space. — *PTI*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal and Delhi CM Rekha Gupta during the inauguration and foundation stone laying ceremony of development projects in New Delhi —*PTI*

INDIA'S FIRST 'RING METRO' OPENED

Prime Minister Modi launched two new corridors of the Delhi Metro, including the country's first 'Ring Metro.'

While the Majlis Park-Maujpur Babarpur (Pink Line) corridor is of around 12.3 km, the Deepali Chowk-Majlis Park (Magenta Line) corridor spans 9.9 km.

The Majlis Park-Maujpur-Babarpur corridor includes eight elevated stations and forms part of the already operational Majlis Park-Shiv Vihar Pink Line.

With the addition of this stretch, the Pink Line has expanded to about 71.56 km, making it India's first fully operational 'Ring Metro'.

The Majlis Park-Maujpur-Babarpur corridor also features a new bridge over the Yamuna and a double-decker viaduct carrying both a metro line and a road flyover.

The second corridor, from Deepali Chowk to Majlis Park, is an elevated extension of the Botanical Garden–Krishna Park Extension Magenta Line and has seven stations. This extension has increased the total length of the Magenta Line to around 49 km.

— Agencies

WOMEN'S DAY

Rapid Action Force (RAF) personnel take part in a 'Shakti Walk' organised by the Ministry of Women and Child Development on the occasion of International Women's Day, at Kartavya Path in New Delhi —*PTI*

NO IMPACT REPORT YET

Assam axed over 1,00,000 mature trees in 10 years

Nearly 84,000 trees were chopped for various government projects like construction of roads, bridges, flyovers, factories and buildings such as medical colleges, police battalions and all other structures —*ANI*

More than one lakh mature full-grown trees have been felled across Assam since May 2016, when the BJP formed its first government in the state, for various public and private projects, according to official records.

The Assam government, on the other hand, said that all these trees were cut in "dire necessity" to develop the projects, while more than 3.5 crore saplings have been planted in the last two years alone to compensate the loss in green cover.

However, experts from different state-run institutions opined that cutting so many trees have resulted in "significant ecological loss" and comparing felling of mature trees with planting saplings is "problematic", while terming it "scientifically concerning" for no study to assess the impact.

Replying to a set of queries sent to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (PCCF) through an application under the Right to Information Act, 15 out of 44 wildlife and territorial divisions across Assam have said that 1,06,896 trees have been felled so far since May 2016.

A set of 11 queries were submitted to the Office of the PCCF & Head of Forest Force under the Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department of the Assam government. It was forwarded to 43 divisions across the state.

Apart from the 15 divisions that provided data, 12 more responded to the RTI application but did not give any information related to tree felling.

No reply has come from the remaining 16 divisions at all so far. None of the 27 divisions that responded to the queries have conducted any study on the impact on ecology for cutting these huge numbers of trees over the years.

When contacted, Assam Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary told PTI that the trees were cut for oil exploration projects as well as infrastructure development.

Giving examples, Patowary said a huge number of trees were cut for the four-laning of National Highway-17 from Guwahati to Goalpara and construction of the Darrang Medical College and Hospital (DMCH).

"In most places where trees were cut, roads have been developed — mainly the national highways. Besides, ONGC and Oil India are also exploring crude and developing wells at new locations. For that too, some trees were felled," he added.

The DMCH is being built at a location where there was a silk plantation. So, the entire area was cleared for construction work, the minister said.

"We have planted a huge number of saplings against these felled trees. In 'Amrit Briksha Andolan', we planted one crore saplings in a single day. There are other schemes also. We have planted a total of 3.5 crore saplings in the last two years," he added.

According to the RTI data, most of the responding authorities said that more than 70 per cent saplings have survived after proper care.

Over 26,000 trees have been felled in notified forest areas since May 2016, while the remaining have been cut in non-forest locations.

Nearly 84,000 trees were chopped for various government projects like construction of roads, bridges, flyovers, factories and buildings such as medical colleges, police battalions and all other structures. More than 10,000 trees have been felled for private works. The available information shows that almost 65,000 trees have been logged from 2021 to 2025 during Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's tenure.

Over 18,000 trees were removed during his predecessor Sarbananda Sonowal's period.

When contacted, Cotton University Environmental Biology & Wildlife Sciences Assistant Professor Narayan Sharma told PTI that equating the felling of mature trees with planting saplings is "problematic".

"A full-grown mature tree represents decades of ecological value that cannot be quickly or easily replaced. In most cases, sapling plantations hardly compensate for the loss of mature trees immediately, as it takes decades for them to provide comparable ecosystem services, if they survive at all to the adult stage," he added.

On the absence of a study to assess the impact of felling such a huge number of trees, Sharma, an expert of biodiversity conservation, said that when large numbers of trees are felled at a particular location, a proper ecological impact assessment "must be conducted".

He stressed that such a study or research is necessary to ascertain the damage to local microclimate and biodiversity ecosystem, including its hidden impact on human physical and mental health.

Bora, a GIS and Ecohydrology expert, also commented that not conducting the impact assessments in respective divisions is "scientifically concerning". —*PTI*

SALAR سالار

Balendra's RSP makes history with victory in Nepal polls

The newly formed Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) of rapper-turned-politician Balendra Shah has secured a landslide victory in Nepal's general elections, decimating the established parties in the politically fragile Himalayan nation.

Formed in 2022 by Ravi Lamichhane, the party has already won 117 of the 165 directly elected seats while it is leading in another eight in the House of Representative elections, according to the Election Commission (EC).

Results for 152 of the 165 seats have been announced so far by the EC.

The Nepali Congress (NC) is a distant second, winning 17 seats.

The Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) of ousted prime minister KP Sharma Oli has won just seven seats and is leading in three.

The Nepal Communist Party has won seven seats; the Shram Sanskriti Party has won two and is leading in one while the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) has won one seat. Among the winners is one independent.

The RSP's seats include a clean sweep in all 15 constituencies of three districts in Kathmandu Valley, the EC data showed.

Popularly known as "Balen", the 35-year-old prime-ministerial candidate of the RSP defeated four-time former prime minister KP Sharma Oli, the chair of Nepal's legacy party — CPN-UML — by a huge margin of about 50,000 votes in the Jhapa-5 constituency. Balen secured 68,348 votes against 74-year-old Oli's 18,734, the EC said.

Balen is expected to be the next prime minister of Nepal, reflecting a public mood of rejection of established parties.

He will be the first Madhesi prime minister of the Himalayan country and also the youngest to occupy the top post in Nepal's parliamentary history.

Legacy parties failed to convince voters for whom the major issues included fighting corruption and an end to nepotism apart from a generational change in political leadership of the Himalayan nation.

Former deputy speaker Indira Rana Magar, of the RSP, won from Jhapa-2 by defeating the speaker of the dissolved House of Representatives and senior leader of CPN-UML Dev Raj Ghimire.

Rana Magar won by a huge margin of 48,742 votes against Ghimire, who secured 11,368 votes.

Nepali Congress Pesident Gagan Thapa, 49, who was projected as his party's prime ministerial candidate, lost from Dhanusha-4 constituency to Amaresh Singh of the RSP.

Singh received 33,688 votes against Thapa's 22,831, according to the Election Commission. 10 office bearers of the CPN-UML, including the party's general secretary Shankar Pokharel, also lost the election.

Other leaders of the CPN-UML who lost were vice presidents Bishnu Paudel, Prithvi Subba Gurung and Gokarna Bista, deputy general secretary Raghubir Mahaseth, and secretaries Sherdhan Rai, Mahesh Basnet, Rajan Bhattarai and Bhanubhakta Dhakal.

RSP chairman Lamichhane won with a huge margin from the Chitwan-2 constituency, marking his third consecutive victory, with 54,402 votes against his nearest rival, NC's Mina Kumari Kharel, who received 14,564 votes.

The election also saw 10 women candidates emerge victorious, nine from the RSP and one from the NC.

Nepal witnessed about 60 per cent voter turnout during the 5 March election to House of Representatives.

Meanwhile, the RSP is also leading in the proportional voting system with 18,15,857 votes, followed by the Nepali Congress with 6,18,630 votes.

The CPN-UML has received 5,19,353 votes, the Nepali Communist Party 2,45,804, the RPP 1,31,277 and Shram Sanskriti Party 78,072 votes, according to the EC. The election was being closely watched by India.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the people and government of Nepal on Saturday for the successful conduct of the election.

Oli, wished Balen a full five-year tenure for his government in a country that has seen 14 governments in the last 18 years.

Of the 275 members of Parliament, 165 are being elected through direct voting, while the remaining 110 through a proportionate method.

Around 3,400 candidates were vying for 165 seats under direct voting and 3,135 candidates for 110 seats through proportionate voting.

The Gen Z, through its two-day intensified protests on 8 and 9 September last year, ousted Prime Minister Oli.

Though Balen was a popular choice to lead the interim government after Oli's ouster, he declined to lead the interim administration, saying he would prefer to contest the parliamentary election for a full term.

In January, he joined the RSP and was soon declared the party's prime-ministerial candidate. —*PTI*

Balendra Shah at the Election Commission premises after winning the constituency in the Nepal general elections, in Jhapa, Nepal —*PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

12 yrs later, families still search for missing MH370 with 239 onboard

The Boeing 777 plane vanished from radar shortly after taking off on 8 March, 2014, carrying 239 people, mostly Chinese nationals, on a flight from Malaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur, to Beijing —*SCREENGRAB*

Twelve years after Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 vanished with 239 people aboard, a renewed deep-sea search in the southern Indian Ocean has so far failed to locate the missing aircraft, Malaysian authorities said Sunday, as families pressed for the effort to continue.

The Air Accident Investigation Bureau said in a statement that a seabed search conducted by marine robotics company Ocean Infinity between March 2025 and January 2026 surveyed thousands of square kilometres of ocean floor but has not produced any confirmed findings of the aircraft wreckage.

Malaysia gave the nod to the Texas-based company last year to renew the search for Flight 370 under a "no-find, no-fee" contract at a new 15,000-square-kilometre site in the southern Indian Ocean where it was believed to have crashed. Ocean Infinity will be paid USD 70 million only if wreckage is discovered.

The search was carried out for 28 days in two phases — 25–28 March last year and 31 December, 2025, to 23 January this year, covering about 7,571 square kilometres of seabed, the bureau said. Weather periodically disrupted operations, it said.

"The search activities undertaken have not yielded any findings that confirm the location of the aircraft wreckage," it said in a statement. It didn't give details on when the search will resume.

The Boeing 777 plane vanished from radar shortly after taking off on 8 March, 2014, carrying 239 people, mostly Chinese nationals, on a flight from Malaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur, to Beijing.

- Satellite data showed the plane turned from its flight path and headed south to the far-southern Indian Ocean, where it is believed to have crashed. An expensive multinational search failed to turn up any clues to its location, although debris washed ashore on the east African coast and Indian Ocean islands.

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A private search in 2018 by Ocean Infinity also found nothing.

Voice 370, representing the families of some of those aboard the missing plane, urged the government to extend Ocean Infinity's contract and to consider similar arrangements with other deep-sea exploration companies.

Although Ocean Infinity's contract runs until June, the group said the company's vessel has been redeployed for other work and is unlikely to return soon to complete the remaining search areas due to the approaching winter months and deteriorating sea conditions.

"The government pays nothing unless the aircraft is found. Any request by Ocean Infinity to extend the search contract should therefore be granted without hesitation," it said in a statement.

"If the present search is unsuccessful, we would also urge Malaysia to kindly consider extending similar no find, no fee opportunities to other capable deep sea exploration companies."

The group vowed to "continue the fight for answers. We will never give up!" —*PTI*

Trump says Iran bombed its own school

WASHINGTON, 8 MARCH

US President Donald Trump said that Iran bombed an elementary school and killed at least 165 people, mainly children.

The strike, which occurred last week on a school in Iran's southern Minab, has drawn international condemnation.

"In my opinion, based on what I've seen, that was done by Iran," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One on Saturday.

"We think it was done by Iran. Because they are very inaccurate, as you know, with their munitions. They have no accuracy whatsoever."

Israel and the US haven't claimed responsibility for the strike. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth claimed that the strike was under investigation.

However, satellite imagery analysed by AP indicates that the airstrikes on 28 February were done by the US.

The school is adjacent to a walled compound labeled on maps as the Seyyed Al-Shohada Cultural Complex of Iranian's Revolutionary Guard, which included a pharmacy, gym and sports field. The damage in the school were all precision strikes – something that Iran doesn't have the capacity for and the US is known to conduct.

- The strike from last week on a school in Iran's southern Minab, has drawn international condemnation. Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One on Saturday. "In my opinion, that was done by Iran."

Notably, the satellite images show that the school, which was once part of the Revolutionary Guard complex, had been cordoned off a decade ago.

In addition to the school, satellite photos show that blasts struck at least five buildings in the Guard compound. *—AGENCIES*

Graves being dug last week for the 165 people - mostly girl children - who were killed by US-Israeli strikes in Iran *—X @ARAGHCHI*

Iran hits Bahrain desalination plant

Two women from the Iranian Red Crescent Society stand as a thick plume of smoke from a U.S.-Israeli strike on an oil storage facility late Saturday rises in the sky in Tehran, Iran on Sunday *—PTI*

West Asia conflict drags on with no clear end in sight

DUBAI, 8 MARCH

Bahrain accused Iran of striking a desalination plant on Sunday, raising fears that civilian infrastructure may become fair game in the war, as Iran's President vowed to expand the country's attacks on American targets across the region in the face of intense US and Israeli airstrikes.

The strike came after Iran said a US airstrike damaged an Iranian desalination plant. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the strike on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz had cut into the water supply for 30 villages. He warned that in doing so "the US set this precedent, not Iran."

'WHAT ARE THE GOALS?'

Before Tehran even considers a ceasefire, Araghch said, "they have to explain why they started this aggression." Araghchi also told NBC that "there should be a permanent end of the war and unless we get to that, I think we need to continue fighting for the sake of our people and our security."

He says the war "was imposed on us" by the US and Israel, and that "what we are doing is legal acts of self-defense."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump have said that the strikes will continue until their objectives are met, but have been opaque on what the goals are. Trump has also demanded Iran's unconditional surrender.

Asked what he meant by unconditional surrender, he said on Sunday that it is when Iran cries "uncle, when they can't fight anymore... or there's nobody around to cry uncle to."

ISRAEL CONTINUES TO POUND LEBANON

Lebanon's Health Minister said that 83 children are among the 394 killed so far in the conflict over the past week as Israel continued to pound Lebanon. At least 15 people were killed on Sunday and explosions heard in Beirut. Meanwhile, the Israeli military announced that two soldiers were killed in fighting in southern Lebanon on Sunday, the first military fatalities since the start of the war.

'CHEMICAL WARFARE'

An Iranian official deplored the US-Israeli strikes on oil facilities in Iran, saying they pushed the war into a "dangerous phase."

"These attacks on fuel storage facilities amount to nothing less than intentional chemical warfare against the Iranian citizens," Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said on social media. He said such attacks will have "devastating the environment, and endangering lives on a massive scale" because of hazardous materials and toxic substances released.

"The consequences of this environmental and humanitarian catastrophe will not be confined within Iran's borders." Meanwhile, security has been beefed up in US consulate in Karachi following recent clashes.

There have also been unverified reports that there were attacks near the US Embassy in Iraq. *—Agencies*

WHAT ARE DESALINATION PLANTS?

Desalination plants convert seawater into drinking water by removing salt and other minerals. Gulf countries often use the technology as they have limited freshwater sources. The plants usually use large amounts of electricity, often generated from oil or gas. Building a plant can take years, and costs thousands of dollars, depending on the size.

> **The UK, our once great ally... is finally giving serious thought to sending two aircraft carriers to the Middle East. That's OK, Prime Minister (Keir) Starmer, we don't need them any longer... We don't need people that join wars after we've already won**
>
> —DONALD TRUMP, US President

> **We talk a lot about wanting to define what kind of world we live in... We believe the US should explain its plans and how this all relates to what previously defined certain norms**
>
> —SERGEI LAVROV, Russian Foreign Minister

> **Trump got a taste of what happened in Venezuela and like it, thinking he could do the same in Iran. Now he's stuck. We will not leave him alone.**
>
> —ALI LARIJANI, Iran's security Chief

1 WEEK OF WAR, AND MILLIONS SUFFER

Over a week has passed since the conflict began, and it is showing no signs of relenting. Here's what it looks like in numbers:

1,300
people have been killed since the fighting began.

1,00,000
people have been displaced in Iran because of the conflict.

3,00,000
people have been displaced in Lebanon due to the conflict.

25 million
people in the affected areas are already refugees, internally displaced or recent returnees.

THE COST OF WAR

- $100 billion – the cost American citizens have to pay due to the war. Iran Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi said, "This will balloon when markets reopen" and Americans fill gas.
- The first 100 hours of 'Operation Epic Fury' cost the US $3.7 billion in military costs alone. It costs $891.4 million per day, a Washington think tank said.
- Israel, is losing $3 billion weekly due to workspace closure.
- Iran has damaged several of US' THAAD missile defence system, which cost $300 million. US and Israel have also damaged dozens of Iranian weapon systems.
- Brent crude oil costs $93 a barrel, the highest in 2 years.
- India and Pakistan have hiked their fuel and LPG prices.

**SOURCE: UN, NEWS REPORT*

Not helping much: Trump on Russia 'sharing' intel with Iran

DORAL, 8 MARCH

US President Donald Trump said that it was inconsequential if Russia had provided Iran with information to help Tehran target US military personnel and assets in West Asia.

The President dismissed the import of such information-sharing after he attended the dignified transfer for six Army reservists who were killed in a drone strike in Kuwait the day after the US and Israel launched a war on Iran.

"If you take a look at what has happened to Iran in the last week, if they are getting information, it is not helping them much," Trump told reporters on Air Force One as he flew to Miami, where he is spending the rest of the weekend.

He didn't confirm reports that claimed the US believed that Russia had provided Iran with intelligence.

"They would say we do it against them," Trump responded. "Wouldn't they say that we do it against them?"

Trump was referring to US providing Ukraine intelligence to combat Russia.

However, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Russia was expanding its war to the Middle East with Iran. He noted that Russian components were found in the Iranian Shahed drones and cited the reports of intelligence sharing.

"We are dealing with regimes not merely connected to one another, but that sustain one another," he said in a video message. "Therefore, our defence must be coordinated, both here and in the Middle East." *—AGENCIES*

President Donald Trump salutes as the Army transfers the remains of US Army Reserve Sgt. Noah Tietjens, who was killed in a drone strike at a command center in Kuwait *—PTI*

- "If you take a look at what has happened to Iran in the last week, if they are getting information, it is not helping them much," Trump said on Air Force One.

BLAST PROBED AT US EMBASSY IN OSLO

Norwegian police are investigating a potential explosion outside the US Embassy in Oslo from early Sunday, officials said.

No injuries were reported. Police received reports of a "loud bang" or explosion around 1am. Michael Dellemyr, who is leading the police response, told Norway's public broadcaster NRK the explosion was at the public entrance to the building. He said police officers had conducted searches in the area around the embassy in the Morgedalsvegen district of Oslo, 7km outside the city centre.

The US Embassy in Oslo and police did not immediately return requests for comment. Other details are currently not available. *—Agencies*

WHO GETS INVOLVED IN THE WAR?

Int'l law is dead: Russia calls for UNSC P-5 meet

Russia has said international law is dead amid escalating tensions in West Asia, and called for reviving President Vladimir Putin's proposal to convene a summit of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the current global situation underscores the need to revisit Putin's proposal, first made before the Covid-19 pandemic. for a summit of the P-5 -- Russia, the US, China, France and the UK -- to discuss global security and stability through following international law.

Now, Trump says he doesn't want Kurds to fight

Trump said he didn't want Kurdish fighters from Iraq or neighbouring countries to join the war against Iran, a quick turn around after previously supporting the idea. "I don't want the Kurds to go into Iran... They're willing to go in, but I've told them I don't want them to go in... The war is complicated enough as it is... We don't want to see the Kurds get hurt or killed," Trump said. Reports had earlier suggested that the US was in talks with Kurdish fighters.

Petrol shortage in Pakistan: One man killed and two others seriously injured

A man was killed and two others seriously injured after customers opened fire at a petrol pump in Pakistan's Punjab province.

The follows a dispute amid panic buying of fuel triggered by fears of shortages due to the US-Iran conflict.

The incident occurred on Saturday in Sialkot, about 100 km from Lahore, when an altercation broke out between customers and workers at a filling station on Daska Road, police said.

According to police, long queues of motorists had formed at the petrol pumps.

The comes amid concerns grew over oil supplies following the closure of the Strait of Hormuz amid the ongoing US-Israel-Iran conflict.

Colombians vote in Congressional and primary elections

BOGOTÁ, 8 MARCH

Colombians are voting today to elect a new Congress and presidential candidates from three major coalitions ahead of May's election. The election occurs amid heightened concerns over political violence in rural areas. Leftlist President Gustavo Petro, has questioned the integrity of election software, citing irregularities in 2022 when over 390,000 votes after a recount. The EU has deployed election observers. More than 3,000 candidates are competing for 285 legislative seats representing 41.2 million voters. The primaries determine the candidates for the main parties: Centre, Centre-Left, and Right, with the first Presidential round scheduled for 31 May. *—PTI*

SECURITY LAPSE FOUND

Nepal probe body submits Gen Z protest report

KATHMANDU, 8 MARCH

A high-level committee has submitted its findings on Nepal's September 'Gen Z' protests to interim Prime Minister Sushila Karki. The final report has recommended "action against those found responsible" for the events.

This comes as RSP's Balendra Shah is set to be declared the Prime Minister of the country.

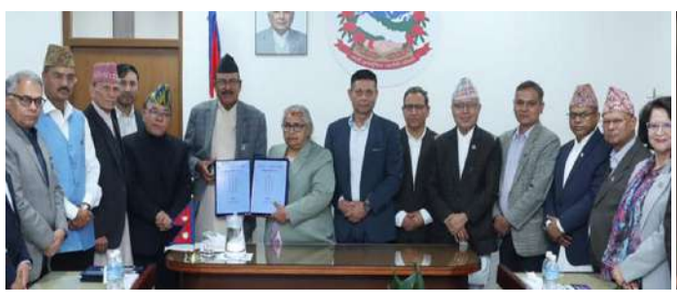
The protests resulted in 76 deaths, the resignation of KP Sharma Oli, and the formation of an interim government after parliament's dissolution.

The report, spanning over 1,000 pages, was compiled by a commission led by former justice Gauri Bahadur Karki, with legal experts and former additional inspector general of police. The panel interviewed about 200 people and consulted several experts in the investigation.

Chairperson Karki emphasised that the commission performed its duties "impartially and in good faith," ensuring that the document only reflects "facts established during the investigation".

Karki stated that the unrest primarily stemmed from poor governance and weak regulatory institutions.

Systemic delays in the executive and judiciary, along with political power-sharing in judicial and constitutional appointments, had fuelled public frustration.



Nepal probe submits report on security lapses during Gen-Z protest. RSP's Balendra Shah greets Election Commission after winning the constituency in the Nepal general elections in Jhapa, Nepal on Saturday *—PTI —ANI*

RSP HAS LANDMARK VICTORY IN NEPAL POLLS

The newly formed Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) of Balendra Shah has secured a landslide victory in Nepal's general elections, decimating the established parties in the politically fragile Himalayan nation. *—ANI*

Explosive devices thrown near Mamdani's house

NEW YORK, 8 MARCH

A counter-protester at Saturday's 'Stop the Islamic Takeover of New York City' rally threw an explosive device filled with nuts, bolts, and screws into the crowd. Police say the individual acted after someone from the initial protest group pepper-sprayed the counter-protesters.

Police are investigating the incident that started late Saturday morning when someone from the anti-Islam protest shot pepper spray into a counterprotesters near the mayoral residence.

Tensions continued to heighten when someone in the counterprotest lit and threw a small device into the protesting crowd of about 20 people. The device struck a barrier and extinguished itself a few feet from police officers.

The same person then ran, and another person gave him a second device, which he then dropped the he devices, which was smaller than a football.

Deputy Commissioner Tisch noted it remains unclear if the items were functional explosives or were a hoax. All three people have been arrested, and an investigation is currently underway. *—PTI*

Anti-Muslim protest outside Zohran Mamdani's home turned chaotic after an 'explosive' (circled) was thrown *—X*

Gold likely to see volatility amid West Asia tensions

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

Gold prices are expected to fluctuate next week as geopolitical developments in the West Asia and macroeconomic data releases influence market sentiment, analysts said. Pranav Mer, VP at JM Financial, mentioned that escalation in West Asia tensions could be positive for gold, while de-escalation might lead to sharp declines. Silver remains volatile. Last week, bullion futures saw sharp movements; silver fell Rs 14,359, and gold declined Rs 470. Globally, silver futures on Comex dropped nearly 10 per cent, and gold fell 1.7 per cent . Rising demand for safe-haven assets and geopolitical escalation in West Asia have kept gold prices in negative territory. *—PTI*

Cipla recalls over 400 cartons of cancer drug: USFDA

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

A US-based subsidiary of drug maker Cipla is recalling over 400 cartons of generic anti-cancer medication due to a manufacturing issue, according to the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA). Warren (New Jersey)-based Cipla USA, Inc is recalling Nilotinib Capsules in two strengths (150 mg and 200 mg), the US health regulator said in its latest Enforcement Report. Cipla is recalling the affected lot (271 and 164 cartons) due to "failed tablet/capsule specifications", it stated. Cipla USA, Inc initiated the Class III voluntary recall on February 18 this year. A Class III recall is initiated in a "situation in which use of, or exposure to, a violative product is not likely to cause adverse health consequences," USFDA stated. *—PTI*

Progcap facilitates '10,000 cr credit to businesswomen

MUMBAI, 8 MARCH

MSME-focused fintech Progcap announced it has enabled over Rs 10,000 crore of credit to women entrepreneurs through its ProgShakti initiative since its launch in March last year, a company official said. The programme offers collateral-free loans of up to Rs 10 lakh to women-led SMEs. Women borrowers now represent 17 per cent of Progcap's portfolio, growing 40 per cent annually, mostly from Tier 2 and 3 markets. Shrivastava highlighted that ProgShakti aims to remove traditional barriers such as collateral requirements, enabling women entrepreneurs to access unsecured loans independently. SIDBI reports a 35 per cent credit gap for women entrepreneurs, compared to 20 per cent for men. *—PTI*

BSE warns investors over fake video of MD & CEO

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

The Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) issued a high-priority alert regarding a circulating deepfake video misusing the image of MD & CEO Sundararaman Ramamurthy. Despite previous efforts to remove it, the false footage has resurfaced on social media and messaging platforms. The BSE clarified that the video falsely features Mr Ramamurthy, claiming to offer stock tips and investment advice. The exchange stated, "The video is fake, manipulated and maliciously created using deepfake technology to mislead investors." They emphasised that neither Ramamurthy nor any BSE official provides stock tips or endorses investment groups. Investors are urged to remain vigilant, follow official sources, and avoid falling for such scams, as BSE works with law enforcement to remove these videos. *—ANI*

India taps alternative crude supplies amid Iran war

About half of India's crude comes via the Strait of Hormuz

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

Indian refiners have begun negotiating for additional crude cargoes from the US, Russia and West Africa to ensure supplies remain adequate in the event of West Asia conflict drags on for a longer period, industry officials and analysts said.

Refineries, which convert crude oil into fuels like petrol and diesel, have deferred planned maintenance shutdowns and are maintaining normal processing rates to create buffers that could meet the country's requirement in the near term, they said.

India imports about 88 per cent of its crude oil requirement, with roughly half of those supplies in February passing through the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow sea lane between Iran and Oman that serves as a key energy transit route for global markets.

Indian refiners are tapping crude from West Africa, Latin America and the US, he said adding the US Treasury Department issuing a 30-day waiver to allow the sale and delivery of sanctioned Russian oil that has already been loaded on vessels to India has opened up another avenue.

The waiver permits the sale, delivery or discharge of crude oil and petroleum products of Russian origin that were loaded onto vessels on or before 5 March, including ships subject to certain sanctions.

The exemption remains valid until 5 April, allowing cargoes already in transit to be completed without violating sanctions restrictions.

There were 120 million barrels of Russian crude on the water. Of this, as many as 15 million barrels of Russia-origin crude are sitting on tankers close to India — in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal — while another 7 million Russian crude barrels are idling near Singapore.

Industry sources said Indian refiners have started buying Russian oil. *—PTI*

Foreign portfolio investors withdraw '21,000 cr in March

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

Foreign investors pulled out Rs 21,000 crore (around USD 2.3 billion) from Indian equities over the last four trading sessions amid the West Asia crisis.

The latest sell-off comes after foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) infused Rs 22,615 crore into Indian equities in February.

Prior to that, FPIs withdrew Rs 35,962 crore in January, Rs 22,611 crore in December, and Rs 3,765 crore in November.

The latest outflows occurred during 2-6 March.

Vaqarjaved Khan, senior fundamental analyst at Angel One, said fears of potential disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz pushed Brent crude prices above USD 90 per barrel, triggering a global risk-off sentiment.

Rupee depreciation beyond the 92-per-dollar level, elevated US Treasury yields drawing capital back to safe-haven assets and mixed outlook for Q4 FY26 corporate earnings also contributed to the outflow.

Himanshu Srivastava, principal manager research at Morningstar Investment Research India, noted that higher crude prices increase risks of inflation, the current account deficit, and currency stability, which weigh on foreign investor sentiment toward emerging markets.

Global investors have also shifted towards safer assets such as the US dollar amid rising uncertainty. The recent uptick in US Treasury yields further contributed to capital outflows from emerging markets.

Despite the FPI selling, the market has continued to find support from domestic institutional investors and steady inflows through mutual fund systematic investment plans. *—PTI*

'West Asia crisis, crude prices to drive markets'

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

Developments related to the ongoing conflict in West Asia and its impact on crude oil prices would be the major driving factors for stock markets this week, analysts said.

Besides, global market trends and trading activity of foreign investors would also drive investors' sentiment.

"This week, movements in global crude oil prices and further geopolitical developments in West Asia will remain critical external variables influencing market direction. The week will also feature key macroeconomic releases that could shape near-term sentiment.

"On the domestic front, investors will closely monitor the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation data scheduled for March 12," Ajit Mishra – SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 8.52 per cent to USD 92.69 per barrel.

"The week ahead is likely to remain volatile, with market sentiment largely shaped by persistent geopolitical tensions in West Asia. Investors will closely track global developments, particularly movements in crude oil prices, as energy markets continue to play a critical role in influencing overall risk appetite," Ponmudi R, CEO - Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

In addition, foreign institutional investor (FII) flows and currency movements will remain key variables to watch for emerging markets such as India, he added. *—PTI*

SBI TAKES BIGGEST HIT

Mcap of 8 top firms falls by ₹2.81L cr

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

The combined market valuation (mcap) of eight of the top firms eroded by Rs 2,81,581.53 crore last week, with the State Bank of India taking the biggest hit.

Last week, the BSE benchmark tanked 2,368.29 points, or 2.91 per cent.

From the top-10 pack, Reliance Industries and Infosys were the only gainers.

The market valuation of State Bank of India tumbled Rs 53,952.96 crore to Rs 10,55,567.27 crore.

ICICI Bank's valuation eroded by Rs 46,936.82 crore to Rs 9,40,049.82 crore and that of HDFC Bank dived Rs 46,552.3 crore to Rs 13,19,107.08 crore.

The valuation of Larsen & Toubro tanked Rs 45,629.03 crore to Rs 5,43,208.36 crore.

The mcap of Bajaj Finance dropped by Rs 28,934.56 crore to Rs 5,91,136.03 crore and that of Tata Consultancy Services diminished by Rs 28,492.44 crore to Rs 9,25,380.15 crore.

Hindustan Unilever's mcap declined by 26,350.67 crore to Rs 5,23,042.51 crore and that of Bharti Airtel edged lower by Rs 4,732.75 crore to Rs 10,67,120.50 crore.

However, the market valuation of Reliance Industries jumped Rs 14,750.39 crore to Rs 19,01,583.05 crore.

The mcap of Infosys also climbed Rs 3,459.99 crore to Rs 5,30,546.54 crore.

Reliance Industries remained the most valued domestic firm followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, TCS, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, Infosys, and Hindustan Unilever. *—PTI*

Swiggy, magicpin, Zomato regain growth in Dec qtr

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

India's top three food delivery players— Swiggy, magicpin and Zomato — regained growth momentum in the October-December period after a period of slower expansion, on strong order volumes led by festive demand, affordability-focused offerings and expanding user bases.

With continued investments in marketing, product innovation, and value-led propositions, industry executives said the sector expects the momentum in order growth to sustain in the coming quarters.

Swiggy said its average monthly transacting user (MTU) base grew 22 per cent year-on-year to 24.3 million during the quarter.

Total orders rose to 294 million from 234 million during the period.

Zomato's food delivery business posted 16.6 per cent year-on-year net order value (novemeber) growth at Rs 9,846 crore in the December quarter translating into 21.3 per cent growth. *—PTI*

HC to hear Nayara vs SAP on software service

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

- Nayara had approached the Delhi High Court in September, 2025 after SAP India Pvt Ltd suspended services citing European Union sanctions.

The Delhi High Court will next week hear Nayara Energy's lawsuit against German software company SAP's India unit suspending software services critical to its operations.

Nayara had approached the Delhi High Court in September, 2025 after SAP India Pvt Ltd suspended services citing European Union sanctions. The Court, which had denied urgent relief, is scheduled to hear the petition on 16 March.

The European Union (EU) had in 2025 imposed sanctions on Nayara for its ties to Russia and for refining Russian oil.

Nayara Energy argued before the Court that its agreement is with SAP India, an Indian entity, and therefore, not subject to the EU sanctions. However, SAP India contended that its parent company is based in Germany and it cannot provide its services without their support.

This, it argued, is an "extra-territorial application of law" threatening Indian energy security, as they produce a significant portion of India's petroleum.

Such a move leaves Indian companies and their operations at the mercy of foreign entities' interpretation of law and its applications.

It has sought permanent injunction against the move and specific performance by SAP. *—PTI*

WEST ASIA UNREST TO HIT INDIAN STEEL MARKET: BIGMINT

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

- BigMint analysts said crude oil, LNG, and freight costs are rising simultaneously, transmitting cost pressure directly into steel and steel-related commodity markets.

The global steel industry, including India, is expected to face multiple market-related issues in the coming days as the escalating crisis in West Asia impacts fuels cost that has lead to increased freight rates, according to BigMint Research.

Military tensions in the region are increasing as both Iran, and the US, along with Israel, continue to attack each other.

BigMint analysts said crude oil, LNG, and freight costs are rising simultaneously, transmitting cost pressure directly into steel and steel-related commodity markets.

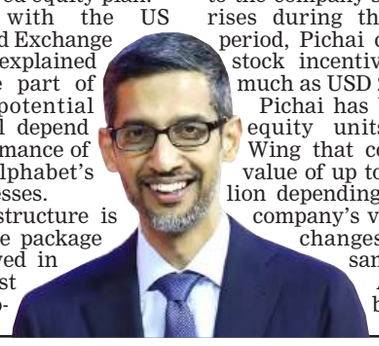
Besides resulting in rising cost of crude oil, the war has also impacted freight cost, which jumped almost 40 per cent in recent times. In the absence of insurance cover, marine operators are also offering freight at non-negotiable prices as per the availability of the vessel.

On the likely impact on steel markets, including India, they said the industry would face sustained input cost inflation across coal, scrap and ore, with freight and energy reinforcing one another.

"The players are expected to pass on the increased cost to customers," an expert said. *—PTI*

Sundar Pichai likely to get pay package of Rs 6,200 cr

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH



Chief executive of Alphabet Inc., **Sundar Pichai**, could receive a compensation package worth up to USD 692 million, about Rs 6,200 crore, over the next three years under a newly approved equity plan.

A filing with the US Securities and Exchange Commission explained how a large part of Pichai's potential earnings will depend on the performance of some of Alphabet's newer businesses.

While the structure is similar to the package Pichai received in 2022, the latest award introduces incentives connected to self-driving technology company Waymo and drone delivery service Wing, two new businesses of Alphabet.

A portion of the payout is tied to the estimated value of Waymo. If the value assigned to the company's equity units rises during the three-year period, Pichai could receive stock incentives worth as much as USD 260 million.

Pichai has been granted equity units linked to Wing that could reach a value of up to USD 90 million depending on how the company's value per unit changes over the same years.

Alphabet's board said

PRICES TO RISE 5-15%

AC to get expensive as energy norms tighten

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

As the mercury starts rising, leading room air conditioner makers are increasing prices in the range of 5-15 per cent to offset sustained increases in raw material costs and supply chain expenses.

The hikes, being rolled out between February and April, come just ahead of the peak summer season when demand typically surges.

Leading players, including Daikin, Voltas, Blue Star, LG, Haier, and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, have announced increases across models, passing on higher input costs for key raw materials such as copper, a weaker rupee, new energy-efficiency norms and an increase in freight costs. Industry executives said while adjustments are unavoidable, they expect strong sales momentum this year, aided by forecasts of a hotter summer and improved energy savings from new star-rated models.

This price hike will almost negate the benefits extended under GST 2.0 reforms on RAC, in which tax was reduced by 10 per cent to 18 per cent from the previous 28 per cent.

Last year proved challenging for the room air conditioner industry, as sales were impacted on account of unseasonal rainfall, along with other factors.

The industry had a very good growth a year before that, in 2024, when several parts of the country saw intense heatwaves.

The room air conditioner market is estimated to be around 13.5 million units, in which players, including Voltas, LG, Daikin, BlueStar, Hitachi, Panasonic, and Lloyd, etc compete. *—PTI*

1)Indian cricketers MS Dhoni, second right, and Rohit Sharma, second left, ICC Chairman Jay Shah, left, and others bring the tournament trophy 2)Singers Falguni Pathak and Sukhbir Singh set the mood 3)Fireworks and coloured smoke fill the stadium during the opening ceremony before the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 final 4) Puerto Rican singer Ricky Martin performs before the start of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 –PTI

Martin headlines closing ceremony

Sanju overtakes Kohli in elite T20 WC batters list

AHMEDABAD, 8 MARCH

Global pop icon and two-time Grammy winner Ricky Martin set the stage on fire as he performed hits like Livin' la Vida Loca and 'The Cup of Life' during the closing ceremony ahead of the ICC T20 World Cup final here on Sunday.

Martin was joined by Indian singers Sukhbir Singh and Falguni Pathak, as the trio provided a musical prelude to the showdown in Ahmedabad between India and New Zealand.

Known as the 'Prince of Bhangra', Sukhbir performed his famous Punjabi hits like 'Oh Ho Ho Ho' with a large dance troupe, while 'Dandiya Queen' Pathak opened the event with Gujarati folk and Bollywood hits, with around 50 dancers.

Indian batter Sanju Samson scripted perhaps the most important knock of his redemption arc, scoring a brilliant 89 during the T20 World Cup final against New Zealand at Ahmedabad's Narendra Modi Stadium on Sunday, registering the highest individual score in a T20 World Cup final. Samson's brilliant run continues as he went past legendary Virat Kohli to become the batter with the most runs in a single T20 World Cup and also joined Virat and Shahid Afridi in an elite list of batters with fifties in T20 World Cup semifinal and final both. The hard-hitting batter made another fantastic 46-ball 89, with five fours and eight sixes at a strike rate of 193.48.

His knock has overtaken West Indies batter Marlon Samuels' 85* against England in the 2016 T20WC final and New Zealand star Kane Williamson's 85 against Australia in the 2021 edition final.

Samson has made 321 runs so far in five innings at an average of 80.25 and a strike rate of 199.37, with 27 fours and 24 sixes, and, at the time of writing, is the second-highest run-getter in the tournament. He has overtaken Virat Kohli's total of 321 runs in the 2014 T20WC edition to have the most runs by an Indian during a single T20WC edition. However, Pakistan batter Sahibzada Farhan overtook Virat's record earlier, ending the tournament with 383 runs at an average of 76.60 and a strike rate of 160.25, with two centuries and two fifties. —*PTI*

ONE-OFF WOMEN'S D/N TEST

Australia outclass India by 10 wickets

PERTH, 8 MARCH

Australia translated their overwhelming dominance over the last three days into a lop-sided 10-wicket win over India in the one-off women's day-night Test here on Sunday.

Australia earlier did the ground work for their victory, bowling out India for 149 in their second innings, and then scaled down a nominal target of 25 without any ado.

It was also a fitting farewell for skipper Alyssa Healy, who ended her career in Baggy Green with a magnificent win over a rival against whom she always excelled.

Writing was very much on the wall once India started the third day at 105 for six. Overnight, India batters Pratika Rawal (63) and Sneh Rana (30) took India to 132.

Rawal showed excellent temperament during her fifty but the task was way too tall for her to manage.

Once Rana was ousted by Ash Gardener with a quick delivery, taking out the batter's off-stump, India combusted quickly.

A combination of Gardner and Player of the Match Annabel Sutherland fittingly ended India's innings. Sutherland took a fine tumbling catch at the edge of the circle when Rawal's mistimed pull off the off-spinner failed to find power or distance.

It also signalled the end of India's second innings.

Australia openers Georgia Voll and Phoebe Litchfield were never going to be challenged by a target of 25, and the pair did the job with ease in just 4.3 overs.

"We started well in T20Is with a series win, but could not continue the good work in ODIs and Tests. Playing a full series in Australia was a good experience. The Pink Ball Test was a different challenge," said India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur after the match.

Her Australian counterpart, Healy, said: "Bouncing back from the T20 series defeat was unbelievable, and proud of the bunch.

"I am going to sing that team song one last time, but happy to see this team going forward and get some good results. The last week or so has been amazing," said Healy.

Australia 323 (Sutherland 129, Perry 76, Satghare 4-50) and 28 for 0 (Voll 16*, Litchfield 11*) beat India 198 (Rodrigues 52, Sutherland 4-46) and 149 (Rawal 63, Rana 30, Hamilton 3-32, Gardner 2-8, Sutherland 2-15, King 2-23) by ten wickets. —*PTI*

Alyssa Healy leads Australia off the field one final time -PTI

-PTI

ICC postpones Doha meeting due to Middle East conflict

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

The International Cricket Council's (ICC) three-day meet from 25 to 27 March in Doha, Qatar, has been postponed in the wake of the ongoing conflict involving the US, Israel, and Iran, said on Sunday.According to an ICC source, the meeting has been rescheduled for next month on the same continent.The source said a formal communication was sent to ICC members on Saturday, a day before the T20 World Cup final between India and New Zealand in Ahmedabad.The 25-27 March meeting was expected to be attended by ICC Board Directors, Chief Executives, Committee Members, and senior leadership "as part of the organisation's ongoing governance calendar, providing an important opportunity to deliberate over key matters.—*PTI*

-PTI

NZ woman fast bowler Lea retires from ODI cricket

WELLINGTON, 8 MARCH

Veteran New Zealand fast bowler Lea Tahuhu on Sunday announced her retirement from Women's ODI cricket. The 35-year-old Tahuhu drew curtains on a 15-year career, finishing with 125 wickets from 103 matches, a record for the New Zealand Women's ODI team. She made her debut against Australia in June 2011. Tahuhu went on to feature in four Women's ODI World Cups (2013, 2017, 2022, and 2025). Her match against England in last year's World Cup was her final ODI for New Zealand. In World Cups alone, Tahuhu picked up 36 wickets, a record for New Zealand, and the ninth best on the all-time charts. It's always been a privilege and honour to pull on the White Ferns shirt in ODI cricket.—*PTI*

ALL ENGLAND OPEN

Lin beats Sen 21-15, 22-20 to win men's singles title

BIRMINGHAM, 8 MARCH

Indian badminton ace Lakshya Sen went down to familiar foe Lin Chun-Yi in the men's singles final of the All England Open here on Sunday as the country's wait to see a champion again at the prestigious tournament continued. The 24-year-old Indian fought hard but could not overcome the challenge of the left-handed Taiwanese shuttler, losing the intense title clash 15-21, 20-22.

It was Sen's fifth straight defeat to Lin and second runner-up finish at the tournament. He had made the final in 2022 as well, but could not cross the finish line. Sen, who battled through blisters and cramps during a gritty semifinal win on Saturday, produced a spirited campaign through the week, defeating a string of higher-ranked opponents before falling short in the title clash against Lin. —*PTI*

Adkar wins W35 ITF event in Kalaburagi

KALABURAGI, 8 MARCH

In-form Vaishnavi Adkar clinched the second and so far, the biggest title of her career as she defeated Ankita Raina in an all-Indian final at the W35 ITF event in Kalaburagi, Karnataka, on Sunday.

A day after winning the doubles title, the two players battled hard for two hours and 14 minutes before the 33-year-old Ankita went down 7-6(3), 6-4 to Vaishnavi, 12 years her junior.

"It was a very good week for me, conditions were very tough, and I just feel proud that I was able to push till the last match in these conditions.

Since I was a kid, I have seen Ankita play at a high level.

World No. 464 Vaishnavi Adkar earned USD 30,000 and 35 ranking points –PTI

So, competing with her, playing doubles with her, is a very big thing. I knew that she doesn't leave the match till the last point.

So, I just had to keep fighting at every point and I was able to do that," Vaishnavi said after her victory.

It was a topsy-turvy affair involving as many as 15 breaks of serve.

Vaishnavi failed to close the opener at 6-5 despite having a set point on her serve.

Nevertheless, the youngster dominated the tiebreak to take the lead in the contest.Leading 4-2 in the second set, Vaishnavi seemed to have put some daylight between herself and Ankita.

However, Ankita, playing her first final in three years, fought back to equalise. —*PTI*

ADITI ASHOK FINISHES TIED THIRD IN BLUE BAY LPGA

HAINAN ISLAND, 8 MARCH

Aditi Ashok dropped three bogeys in a row in the middle of the round but still managed to hold on for an even par 72 that helped her finish tied-third in the Blue Bay LPGA here.

Aditi birdied the third but gave away shots on the seventh, eighth, and the ninth before picking up strokes on the 15th and the 18th.

The Indian golfer's 72 saw her reach 8-under for four rounds, and she finished three shots behind the winner, Mi Hyang Lee (73) of Korea. This was Aditi's best finish since her T2 at the JM Eagle LA Championship in 2023. —*PTI*

Arshdeep wins 25m pistol in T3 finals

NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

Arshdeep Kaur secured the top spot in the finals of the 25m pistol women's event in a high-quality field of the National Selection Trials (Group A) that also featured double Olympic medallist Manu Bhaker.

The Punjab markswoman, who qualified in eighth position, edged out the experienced Divya T.S 37-36 to finish on top in the eight-shooter final.

Former Asian Games champion Rahi Sarnobat secured third place with 33 hits, after Divya prevailed over her in a shoot-off.

Rhythm Sangwan finished fourth, followed by Niveditha V. Nair, Bhaker, nationals bronze medallist Anjali Choudhary, and Chinki Yadav, who completed the top eight. Bhaker qualified for finals in the top spot after two days of qualification in the precision and rapid stages with a combined score of 582-17x (Precision 287, Rapid 295).

Rahi followed with a score of 580-20x (Precision 292, Rapid 288), and Divya T.S qualified in third place with a score of 580-13x (Precision 290, Rapid 290). —*PTI*

Ranji triumph energises J-K youth: Jitendra

JAMMU, 8 MARCH

Union minister Jitendra Singh on Sunday said that the historic Ranji Trophy victory of the Jammu and Kashmir cricket team has energised youngsters and reflected the democratisation of opportunities that have led to a renewed sense of aspiration and self-confidence among them in the region.

The minister of state in the prime minister's office was speaking to the media after hosting the winning team at his residence here.

The minister felicitated the players, coaching staff and officials for their remarkable campaign in India's premier domestic cricket tournament and congratulated them for bringing laurels to the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Union territory bagged their maiden Ranji Trophy title, holding eight-time champions Karnataka to a draw in which the former gained a 291-run first innings lead at Hubballi on February 28.

Talking to reporters, Singh described the victory as a proud moment and said the achievement proved that there was never any shortage of talent or potential among the youngsters of Jammu and Kashmir. —*PTI*

Jitendra Singh meets the Jammu and Kashmir cricket team members after they won the Ranji Trophy 2025-26 final match, in Jammu on Sunday -PTI

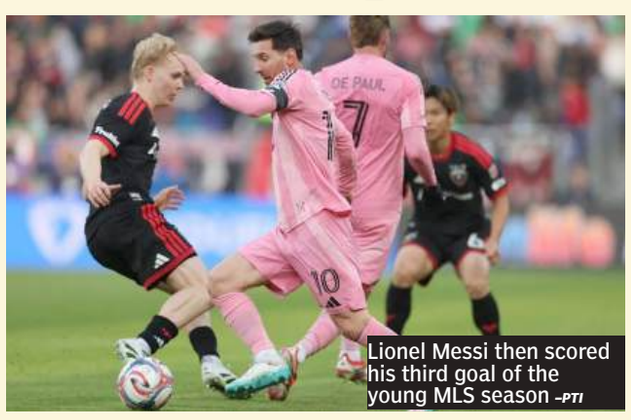
MESSI GAVE FANS WHAT THEY WANTED

Messi lifts Inter Miami past D.C. United 2-1

KUALA LUMPUR, 9 MARCH

Lionel Messi scored in the 27th minute, and Inter Miami held on for a 2-1 victory over D.C. United on Saturday night in front of 72,026 at the home of the Baltimore Ravens.

With interest in Messi obviously high, the game was held in downtown Baltimore instead of at D.C. United's smaller venue in Washington. Messi gave many fans what they came to see when he put Inter Miami (2-1-0) ahead 2-0 in the first half. Rodrigo De Paul also scored for the defending MLS Cup champions. Tai Baribo pulled United (1-2-0) within one in the 75th minute, but D.C. was unable to equalize.



Lionel Messi then scored his third goal of the young MLS season –PTI

It was an eventful week for Messi and his team, which visited the White House on Thursday.

Inter Miami opened the scoring in the 17th minute when De Paul collected the ball about 15 yards from the goal and struck a shot into the far side of the net.

Messi then scored his third goal of the young MLS season, slipping behind the D.C. defense to receive Mateo Silvetti's pass, then flicking the ball with one touch past goalie Sean Johnson.

Inter Miami has won two straight since dropping its league opener 3-0 to Los Angeles FC.

D.C. United broke through in the second half. Jackson Hopkins' shot forced a save, and Baribo put away the rebound. —*PTI*

Djokovic remains hopeful of defending Olympic crown

PARIS, 8 MARCH

Novak Djokovic said that even at 38-years-old he still has long-term goals and is keen to defend his Olympic title from Paris at the Los Angeles Games in 2028.

Djokovic described his win over Carlos Alcaraz to claim the gold medal at the 2024 Summer Games as the biggest sporting success of his storied career, but the Serb will be 41 when the LA Games get underway. "That's one of the long-term goals, to reach the Olympics. That would be nice," he told reporters after his second-round win over Kamil Majchrzak at Indian Wells on Saturday.

"It's still a long way off. I think at my age and this stage of my career, every year seems like a longer period than it is for anyone who is younger.

"But I'll try to make it, definitely one of the motivations, so I'll try to be there."

Andy Murray is the only man to successfully defend an Olympic singles gold medal. Djokovic, the winner of 24 Grand Slams, won bronze at the Beijing Games in 2008. Playing in his first match since his impressive run at the Australian Open that included a thrilling five-set semi-final win over Jannik Sinner.—*PTI*